

VZCZCXRO0753

PP RUEHBZ RUEH DU RUEHGI RUEHJO RUEHMA RUEHMR RUEHPA RUEHRN RUEHTRO
DE RUEHTO #0636/01 1551619
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 041619Z JUN 09
FM AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0366
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0416
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MAPUTO 000636

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KPAO](#) [KMDR](#) [KDEM](#) [MZ](#)

SUBJECT: MOZAMBICAN MUSLIMS RESPOND FAVORABLY TO PRESIDENT
OBAMA'S SPEECH

REF: A. MAPUTO 90

[1](#)B. 08 MAPUTO 1257

[1](#)C. 08 MAPUTO 1085

[1](#)D. 08 MAPUTO 637

[1](#)1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Nearly fifty Mozambicans attended a live broadcast of President Obama's June 4 speech from Cairo, among them prominent Mozambican Muslims including Imam Nazir Lunat from the Grand Mosque in central Maputo, and several Ambassadors from Muslim countries, including Egypt. The President's comments were warmly welcomed, with many participants expressing admiration for the policy statements.

In a discussion led by the Charge that followed, Muslims including Sheikh Abdul Karimo, expressed guarded optimism. Separately, well-known editor Fernando Lima contributed to analysis and commentary of a live broadcast of the speech on independent T.V. station TIM. President Obama's speech provides a perfect opportunity to engage the Mozambican public, particularly its significant Muslim population on U.S. policy. The overall positive comments of prominent Muslims, many who are skeptics of U.S. policies, bode well for our continued efforts to reach out to the Muslim community in Mozambique. END SUMMARY.

MUSLIM COMMUNITY INTEREST

[1](#)2. (SBU) Forty-four Mozambicans, including prominent members of Mozambique's Muslim community, accepted an invitation from Embassy Maputo to view and discuss a live broadcast of President Obama's "A New Beginning" speech broadcast live from Cairo. Among the prominent Muslims present were Algerian Ambassador Ahmed Lakhdar Tazir, Egyptian Ambassador El Sayed El Tantawi, Muslim scholar Sheikh Abdul Karimo, and Imam Nazir Lunat of the Grand Mosque in downtown Maputo.

PUBLIC AFFAIRS HOSTS FOR PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

[1](#)3. (SBU) The participants reacted warmly to the President's greeting in Arabic, with many replying to the television. Throughout the speech, they responded favorably to President Obama's calls for religious tolerance, and appeared particularly impressed by the President's decision to quote repeatedly from the Quran. During discussion following the speech, the Charge highlighted the opportunities for the Embassy in Mozambique to expand our existing outreach efforts, in order to build not just a bridge between Muslim and Western culture, but as the Egyptian Ambassador observed, greater trust among nations. The largely-Muslim audience overwhelmingly expressed support and admiration for the President's initiatives, noting with pleasure the thematic parallels between the speech and the Quran, particularly in

regards to tolerance, peace, and equality.

MOZAMBICAN MUSLIM ANALYSIS

¶4. (SBU) The presence of Imam Lunat and Sheik Karimo was especially noteworthy. Lunat, a rare attendee of Embassy events, is known as an opponent of U.S. policy in Afghanistan and a fiery speaker whose Friday sermons at the Grand Mosque are so popular they are often recorded and distributed around the country. During the discussion session, he carefully observed that no one man can effect change on the scale proposed by President Obama, and that significant USG follow-through would be needed to achieve the goals stated. Sheik Karimo, alluding to Afghanistan, gently noted that waging war was an unlikely means to peace. In informal conversation following the discussion session, he added that he viewed as contradictory the President's reference to Black Muslim Americans using non-violent means to achieve a measure of political, social and economic parity, and his support of a military solution in Afghanistan and Pakistan. One younger Mozambican Muslim woman told the Charge that she greatly admired the President's initiative, and would look forward to seeing how the speech would inform policy. She also especially noted how the President's usage of the Quran "makes us as Muslims feel more comfortable," and evidenced that he, or his speech writers, had evidently studied Islam.

LIVE ANALYSIS FROM INDEPENDENT T.V. TIM

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¶5. (SBU) There was great interest in the speech among Mozambicans in general; with independent television station TIM carrying a live feed with simultaneous commentary and analysis from poloff, Professor Silveiro Rouguane, and award-winning Editor of independent weekly Savana Fernando Lima. The commentators voiced their admiration for the President's statements, marking what was described as a new open "policy of goodwill." The President's statements on the two-state solution, affirmations of a return to the high principles that the U.S. is known for, the value of human rights and transparency, and overtures towards Iran drew praise, with Lima agreeing that President Obama was making good on his campaign promises, but raising concerns about the practicality of finding solutions to these difficult issues. Lima was skeptical of the assertion that violent extremists made up a small minority of the Muslim world, suggesting that their impact had been extremely significant.

COMMENT: SPEECH WELL RECEIVED, EVEN BY CRITICS

¶6. (SBU) Mozambique, with a significant Muslim population numbering over four million, pays careful attention to U.S. policy towards the Muslim World. The overall positive comments of prominent Muslims, many who are skeptics of U.S. policies, bodes well for our continued efforts to reach out to the Muslim community in Mozambique.
Chapman